

"BOX THIRTEEN"

Written by

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CEMS AND CREMS

"BOX THIRTEEN"

CAST

BETTY.....	ACTOR
HELEN.....	ACTOR
CHARACTER NAME.....	ACTOR
CHARACTER NAME.....	ACTOR
CHARACTER NAME.....	ACTOR
CHARACTER NAME.....	ACTOR

GUEST CAST

TBD.....	ACTOR
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CEMS AND CREMS

"BOX THIRTEEN"

OFFICE

Teaser, Scene A - Local Authority office of the Cemeteries and  
Crematorium.

Act One, Scene B - Scene Heading

Act Two, Scene C - Scene Heading

Tag, Scene D - Scene Heading

INT.OFFICE-MORNING

A PAIR OF CHEAP METAL FRAMED MAHOGANY DESKS SIT, FRONT CENTRE STAGE, FACING EACH OTHER, IN A BLAND NONDESCRIPT OFFICE.

ALONG THE RIGHT HAND WALL, A STACK OF RANDOM NUMBERED PLAIN BROWN CARDBOARD BOXES, BELOW A HIGH LEVEL WINDOWSILL.

ON THE LEFT WALL, AN OBSCURED REEDED SLIDING GLASS SCREEN HATCH, WITH THE OFFICE DOOR ADJACENT.

ARRANGED ALONG THE FACING (BACK DROP) WALL, BEHIND THE DESKS, STANDS A WOODEN COAT STAND, A LINE OF OLD METAL FILING CABINETS AND A SHELF, WITH AN ODD SELECTION OF TEA MUGS, ONE WITH SPOONS AND KNIVES PROTRUDING, AN ELECTRIC KETTLE, A CARTON OF TEA BAGS, COFFEE JAR AND HALF CRUMPLED BAG OF SUGAR.

THE DOOR TO THE OFFICE OPENS AND **BETTY**, THE OFFICE MANAGER, ENTERS. A WOMAN IN HER LATE FIFTIES EARLY SIXTIES, SHE CARRIES THE MEMORY OF A YOUNGER ATTRACTIVE WOMAN. SMARTLY DRESSED, SHE REMOVES HER COAT AND SHAKES OUT AN UMBRELLA BEFORE PLACING IT IN THE COAT STAND AND THEN HANGING UP HER COAT.

SHE LIFTS THE KETTLE, LOOKS TO CONFIRM IT'S EMPTY AND GOES BACK OUT THE DOOR RETURNING TO PUT A NOW FILLED KETTLE BACK ON THE SHELF.

SHE THEN CROSSES TO THE WINDOW AND KICKING ONE OF THE STACKED BOXES WITH PRACTISED EASE INTO A POSITION UNDER THE WINDOW, SHE STEPS UP TO PEER QUICKLY OUT THE WINDOW BEFORE STEPPING BACK DOWN.

SHE THEN MOVES TO SETTLE DOWN BEHIND HER DESK.

AS SHE ARRANGES SOME PAPERWORK, THE OFFICE DOOR IS HURRIEDLY THROWN OPEN AND **HELEN**, A YOUNG GIRL IN HER EARLY TEENS, HURRIES IN PULLING HER JACKET DOWN, WHICH HAS BEEN PULLED UP OVER HER HEAD AND WITH ONE HAND, SHAKING OUT THE RAIN, FROM HER BLONDE, TINTED HAIR.

SHE HAS A CHILDLIKE Demeanor, LIGHT SHORT SUMMER SKIRT, A TANK TOP, SHOWING A THIN BARE MID-RIFF, FLAT BALLEt SHOES AND GOLD CHAINS ROUND HER NECK, ONE WITH THE NAME "HELEN" FORMED IN GOLD LETTERING, A SELECTION OF RINGS ON HER FINGERS AND LARGE HOOPED GOLD EARRINGS.

UNDER ONE ARM IS A WHITE CLUTCH BAG AND, IN HER HAND, SHE CARRIES A CARTON OF MILK.

**BETTY**

(without looking up and  
continuing to read her  
paperwork)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

You're late Helen..again..This is getting to be a bad habit. Are you not feeling well ?... is something bothering you?

**HELEN**

SHE STOPS RIGID, IN HER ENTRY AND  
(defensively)

Naw!.. Nuthin' ahm fine.

**BETTY**

SHRUGGING, AS SHE CONTINUES TO FOCUS AND MOVE FILES, ON HER DESK.

Fair enough.. But I won't be able to help if your time sheets cost you a permanent job.

**HELEN**

SHE SHRUGS OF HER JACKET AND HANGS IT UP AS SHE SPEAKS.

Aye.. well, Anyhow, ah wis oan time,  
it wis ma bus that wis late.

**BETTY**

(continuing to focus on her paperwork and with heavy irony)

Oh well, that's all right then we'll dock your bus the fifteen minutes.

NOW LOOKING UP

My God. What are you not wearing.

**HELEN**

SHE LOOKS DOWN AT HER OUTFIT AND THEN AT BETTY.  
(with injured pride)

It's the season's fashion Betty.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

Well that seasons fashion'll only give  
you this seasons pneumonia.

**HELEN**

Aw, yir jist auld fashioned. Any how,  
ah hid tae go and get the mulk, so it  
widnae be fair tae dock any ay ma  
wages

**BETTY**

Life's not fair. If you want to get a  
job and keep it, you'll have to make  
sure you get in earlier than your  
start time. There's one of the first  
work experience lessons I'm giving  
you.

The next lesson is,.. get the kettle  
on.

HELEN PUTS HER CLUTCH BAG ON HER DESK AND MOVES TO THE SHELF  
TO BEGIN PREPARATIONS.

**HELEN**

Is it, tea aur coffee yhe want,  
Betty.?

**BETTY**

RISING AND PASSING HELEN, AS SHE GOES TO COLLECT A PILE OF  
FILES STACKED ON TOP OF A FILING CABINET

Coffee this morning, waken up the  
brain cells,

AND AS SHE RETURNS TO HER DESK, DROPPING SOME OF THE PILE ON  
HELEN'S DESK.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

for another RUSH into the tedium of  
another day in here.

AND AS SHE SLUMPS WITH RESIGNATION BACK INTO HER CHAIR.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

Milk and two sugar and mind,

(with emphasis)

only one level teaspoon of coffee.

AND AS HELEN BUSIES HERSELF IN THE PREPARATION.

**HELEN**

(defensively as she  
continues her preparations)

Aye aw right. We don't hiv coffe in  
oor hoose. Ma Mammy disnae buy it.. Ma  
Daddy disnae like it.

**BETTY**

(challenging)

What about your Mammy? You.?

**HELEN**

TURNING TO FACE BETTY AND CONFUSED BY THE CHALLENGE.

Whit dae yhe mean.?

**BETTY**

Do you like coffee?

**HELEN**

Ma Daddy disnae like it.

**BETTY**

So?

**HELEN**

(bemused)

So, Ma Mammy disnae buy it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HELEN (CONT'D)  
(and with an innocent  
recklessness)

Mibee ah could try it.?

**BETTY**  
(with sarcastic humour)

Why not.

AND RAISING A CLENCHED FIST IN A MOCK SALUTE OF SOLIDARITY

Strike another blow for the  
revolution. Women's emancipation. The  
vote, equal rights, now COFFEE. A  
rebel without a clue.

**HELEN**  
(with disdain)

Oh very funny Ha,Ha. Ah'm no any  
rebel. Ah jist go along wi whit ah've  
tae dae.

FINISHING HER TASK, HELEN PLACES A MUG OF COFFEE ON BETTY'S  
DESK AND THEN MOVES ROUND WITH HER OWN MUG AND TAKING THE  
SEAT AT HER DESK, SLUMPS DOWN WITH A SIGH AND PULLS A FILE  
FROM THE PILE, ABSENTLY TAKING A SWALLOW OF THE COFFEE AND  
IMMEDIATELY MAKING AN EXAGGERATED GRIMACE OF DISTASTE.

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

Yeugh! This is horrible bitter Betty.

**BETTY**  
(looking to her and with mock  
derision)

What? The revolution didn't taste of  
sweet victory.

Did you put sugar in it?

**HELEN**

Ah don't take sugar in ma tea.

**BETTY**  
(with heavy resignation)

It's coffee Helen.

(CONTINUED)



**HELEN**

(subdued)

Oh Aye, right.

AS SHE STARTS TO LEAF THRU' THE PAGES, SHE ABSENTLY PLAYS WITH HER GOLD NECKLACES, CONSTANTLY RUNNING THEM THRU 'HER FINGERS.

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

God. This job'll kill me, so it wull  
and ah've only been here a couple ah  
weeks.

**BETTY**

SIPPING FROM HER MUG OF COFFEE, AS SHE FOCUSSES ON HER OWN PAPERWORK.

Well you'll pass away in the right  
place. We'll box you up and label you,  
without even stirrin' out the room.

**HELEN**

That's gruesome, Betty.

**BETTY**

It would be cost effective, efficient.  
You know how much a funeral costs  
these days? The price would kill  
you...Your family would love it.

**HELEN**

LEANING FORWARD TO LOOK CLOSELY AT THE FILE'S PAGES.

Ah know. A'm lookin' at these invoices  
and that's jist fur the Crem's costs  
tae the undertaker.

**BETTY**

LEANING BACK ON HER CHAIR AND WITH ASSURANCE

Then add on the price of the,

(CONTINUED)

SHE TICKS OFF EACH ITEM ON HER FINGERS

Coffin.. Flowers, Hearse, Taxis,  
Purvey. God, it's more than my wedding  
cost.

**HELEN**

Is that right.?

**BETTY**

Oh aye and if I knew then, what I know  
now, I would have jumped straight  
into,

SHE WAVES HER ARM IN A GENERAL SWEEP, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE  
STACKED BOXES BEHIND HER.

One of them boxes and saved myself a  
worry of years.

**HELEN**

Is yir marriage that bad.?

**BETTY**

No, the bugger had a stroke and died  
in e's fifties.. So I've had a quiet  
ten years.

**HELEN**

Dae yhe no miss him.?

**BETTY**

No, as the Poet said, "I call that ma  
wee stroke a luck" but I keep him  
close.That's him there..

SHE GLANCES BACKWARDS OVER HER SHOULDER GESTURING IN THE  
DIRECTION OF THE BOX EARLIER KICKED.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

Box Thirteen.. It was his lucky number.

**HELEN**

RISING TO LOOK AT THE BOX INDICATED, MOVES TO STARE DOWN AT THE BOX, POINTING AND TURNING TO BETTY

In there?...dae yhe no think he deserves a better burial than under your windae.. That's terrible so it is.

**BETTY**

SPINNING ROUND IN HER OFFICE CHAIR AND RISING FROM HER DESK TO MOVE AND STAND OPPOSITE HELEN, THE BOX AT THEIR FEET BETWEEN THEM.

There's nothing terrible about it. I wasn't wastin' good money. I thought of scatterin' him in the "Garden of Remembrance".

(she snorts derisively)

Huh!.. As if anybody would remember him. Anyway, whose going to visit a scrubby wee patch of grass at the back of the Crem buildin'?.. Of course I could have paid extra for,

AND SHAPING, WITH HER HANDS, A MUSHROOM BLOOMING OF FLOWERS  
(with heavy irony)

THE "ROSE GARDEN".

I mean, what difference would that make.

...unless of course a spiky rose bush blossomed.. He was always a prick.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

But then I thought, no, I'll put him  
in a casket, might as well make him  
useful.

HELEN

Useful.?

BETTY

Aye, useful..  
He's rare and handy for standing on,  
to look out that window..

SHE STEPS UP ON THE BOX AND GLANCES OUT THE WINDOW AND THEN,  
STEPPING DOWN, TURNS TO HELEN.

BETTY (CONT'D)

See if your bus is runnin' late..  
Again.

HELEN

(hushed)

SHE LOOKS TO THE BOX AND THEN TO BETTY

Dae yhe no think that's aw'fae  
disrespectful.?

BETTY

REPLYING, AS SHE RETURNS TO HER DESK, FOLLOWED BY HELEN TO  
HER OWN DESK.

It would only be disrespectful to  
stand on a stranger.

HELEN

How long do you keep ashes here.?

BETTY

It depends. Some don't have the money  
to pay for the casket, right away and  
some..

(CONTINUED)

SHE SHRUGS WITH A RESIGNED INDIFFERENCE

just forget to collect them.

**HELEN**

Aw yir jokin. How kin yhe forget tae  
collect yir loved wans.

**BETTY**

Happens all the time. One woman came  
in complainin' we hadn't posted the  
casket on to her. Her Man was a  
postman.. Thought it would be a nice  
way for him to come home.

**HELEN**

(incredulous)

Aw noo yir jokin.!

**BETTY**

RISING FROM HER DESK, SHE ANSWERS, AS SHE GOES TO THE FILE  
CABINET

Oh no I'm not.

AND OPENING THE TOP DRAWER, PLACES THE FILE ON TOP AND TURNS  
TO HELEN.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

Death is no laughing matter. Only  
life's too serious to be taken  
seriously. Mind you, there's them  
that's just too daft to take serious.

**HELEN**

Whit dae yhe mean.. daft.?

**BETTY**

Oh you get every sort of bampot comin'  
in here. There was one, an Irish man

SHE HOLDS UP HER ARMS TO DEFLECT ANY CRITICISM

(CONTINUED)

and no, this isn't a slight on the  
Irish. But this one was a  
real...Anyway, He comes to the window  
here.

SHE POINTS AND MOVES TO THE SLIDING GLASS SCREEN.

And says,  
(mimes an Irish accent)

"Now would this be the place to  
arrange the funeral"?

"No" I said, "That would be the  
undertaker".

"Oh well" he says, "wouldn't I be  
wanting to change my name, for the  
death certificate"

"Now, why would you want to do  
that"..I said

"Well" he says, "The names O'Dwyer but  
now, isn't there not that many of us  
in Glasgow. So wasn't I thinkin', if I  
changed my name to Murphy, there's  
feckin' plenty of them about.. I'm  
sure to get a visit from somebody that  
thinks we might be related..

Sure, there's nothing so sad, as an  
empty grave.

"But it's not empty" I said, "Your in  
it"

BOTH WOMEN LAUGH.

**HELEN**

(laughing)

And did'e change e's name.?

**BETTY**

RETURNING BACK TO THE OPEN FILE DRAWER AND AS SHE FILES THE FILE LEFT ON TOP OF THE OPEN DRAWER.

Oh hell, I don't know. I sent him to Births and Deaths. Poor soul, didn't even have anybody to organise's funeral.. It's a lot of fuss about nothing.

**HELEN**

Whit dae yhe mean Betty? Yhe widnae want tae go unremembered, wid yhe?

**BETTY**

RETURNING BACK TO HER DESK.

Better suited if people turned up to remember you when you were still breathing. Once your dead you will never know who had any remembrance of you.

AND RESUMING HER SEAT

( in melancholy  
contemplation)

We live in our own memories... dreams and regrets of yesterdays inhabit, inhibit and define us. What real remembrance would others have but perhaps a fleeting shared moment of joy or sadness...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

For most... you are only a nod in the passing.

HELEN

Dae yhe no think yir bein' awfy hard.

BETTY

Hard.. Has anybody close to you died.?

HELEN

(with careful consideration)

The closest..Aye, ma Mammys Mammy ma Nan.

BETTY

And you remember your Nan?

HELEN

RISING TO RETURN HER MUG TO THE SHELF.

Oh aye, a remember her. Ah used tae love gaun tae stay wi her, at the week-ends.

THEN MOVING TO STAND TO LOOK UP OUT THE WINDOW.

THE STAGE IS BLACKENED, A SPOT ILLUMINATES HELEN.

HELEN (CONT'D)

We wid go intae the toon.. aw roon the shops and then we wid go fur tea and cakes.. but best of all, wis jist sittin' at night, in oor goonies, in front ay the fire..

She hid a real coal fire..

Ah could jist lose ma'sael wi ma dreams in the flames ay that fire, wi a cup a tea and a piece a toast...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



HELEN (CONT'D)

She jist made everything so warm..  
safe .. Yhe know whit ah mean.?

THE STAGE IS ILLUMINATED, AS HELEN TURNS TO BE ADDRESSED BY  
BETTY DIRECTLY

**BETTY**

What about your other Nan?

**HELEN**

Whit?

**BETTY**

(with exasperation)

Your Dad's Mother.

**HELEN**

Aw he disnae hiv wan.He wis an orphan  
or sumfin brought up in wanae them  
homes ah think. He never talks about  
it.

..ah mean. I don't know why ahm  
telling yhe aw this.

(Helen stutters to a halt..  
They stare at each other and  
Betty smiles generously with  
understanding.)

**BETTY**

Aye.. it's sometimes easier talkin' to  
a stranger.

BETTY RISES AND CROSSES WITH FILES TO A FILING CABINET AND AS  
SHE OPENS FILES AND CLOSES THE DRAWER, TURNS TO HELEN.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

And your Nan then..Do you visit your  
Nan's grave.?

**HELEN**

(embarassed)

(CONTINUED)

RETURNING BACK TO HER SEAT.

Naw, no really. Is that terrible.?

**BETTY**

No. What's terrible about it.? Your  
Nan lives,

SHE TOUCHES HER HEAD

Here. In your memories.

SHE TOUCHES HER HEART

And Here. In your heart.

What's left, is just a wraggle of  
bones in a hole in the ground or a bag  
of ashes, propped up, under our  
window.

**HELEN**

Yir no very sympathetic.

**BETTY**

Well maybe I'll leave out joining the  
Samaritans.

Look, I'm not a hypocrite. I've no  
patience for all the false sentiment.  
Different, if it's a child.

**HELEN**

Whit's so different aboot ah wean.?

THE STAGE IS BLACKENED; AFTER A PAUSE, A SPOT COMES ON  
ILLUMINATING BETTY. SHE IS AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE AND  
ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE AS IF THEY AREN'T THERE.

**BETTY**

What's so different about a wean she  
asks?

Memories...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

That's the difference about a child.  
She has her memories of her Nan to  
hang onto.. a life lived. But with a  
child... you've really had no time,

SHE WRAPS HER ARMS, TO HUG HERSELF.

to gather those memories... hold them  
close...give you comfort.

THE STAGE IS ILLUMINATED AND BETTY RETURNS TO HER DESK.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

I'm not saying I agree with it. All  
this anguish, about where the ashes  
are scattered. They're scattered. What  
difference does it make where.

SHE LIFTS A PILE OF FILES AND DROPS THEM BACK ON HER DESK.

Apart from giving us a bloody  
headache, tryin' to find out all the  
details, from years gone bye. But..

(in a voice softened by the  
memory of her own lost  
child)

I can understand a parent wanting to  
hang on to the memory of their child..  
for that wee bit longer.

**HELEN**  
(longingly)

Oh that's whit ah want, a wean ay ma  
ain.

**BETTY**

That's your life's ambition.?

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**

Oh aye, a wean and a wee hoose in  
Rothesay.

**BETTY**

In that order?

**HELEN**

Ah need the wean, tae get the hoose.

**BETTY**

My God! Where did this dream of  
Paradise Island come from ?

**HELEN**

Oh ma pal did it. It's dead easy tae  
get a wee hoose in Rothesay, if yir a  
single parent.

**BETTY**

You'll get a "wee hoose" in  
Castlemilk, if your a single parent.

**HELEN**

That's no far enough away and anyway,  
ah'm no that stupit. Who wid want tae  
bring up a wean, oan there ain .. in  
Castlemilk.

**BETTY**

Aye well, that's true. A single parent  
then eh.? You've no plans on marryin'  
the father then.? Who is it by the  
way.. if you don't mind me askin'.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**  
(off hand)

Aw ah don't know. Ah'm no that fussy.  
A wan night stand wid suit me fine.

**BETTY**  
(surprised)

You don't want a husband Helen.?

**HELEN**

Naw. That wid jist complicate things.  
It's easier gettin' the hoose if yir  
oan yir ain. Well, that's whit ma pal  
says anyhow.

**BETTY**

So no man at all.?

**HELEN**

Ach naw. Ah couldnae be bothered wi  
wan a them.

**BETTY**

A wish I had thought of that when I  
was,.. what age are you Helen.?

**HELEN**

Ah'm jist turned sixteen.

**BETTY**

God. So young and.. I guess, smart.

**HELEN**

Ma Mammy disnae think it's very smart.

THE STAGE IS SUDDENLY BLACKENED AND AFTER A PAUSE, A SPOT  
COMES ON, ILLUMINATING HELEN. SHE IS AT THE FRONT OF THE  
STAGE AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE AS IF THEY AREN'T THERE.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

Ah know what people think when they see me.. Hear me.. Ah kin read it in their looks.God, some of them wid even avoid me oan the bus..like ah've got a disease aur somethin'..

Ah watch and listen tae people oan the telly..and ah think,

(she now speaks in properly articulated speech)

I would like to speak properly..

To dress in a classy..stylish manner.

(she again speaks in the vernacular)

But then ma pals wid jist say ah wis tryin' tae be posh and bein' a snob.. Ah know the life ah lead...the world ah live in.. So ah jist dae whit ahm telt. But ah listen tae Betty.. And she's jist cut fae the same cloth and it's worn her oot, tae be a sad, bitter, lonely auld wummin.

(she again speaks in properly articulated speech)

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

I want my own child..

I want my own home..

I want my own fire..

I want my own life.

THE STAGE IS SUDDENLY DARKENED AND THEN, AFTER A PAUSE, IS ILLUMINATED, WITH HELEN SITTING BACK AT HER DESK.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

So what..? Does your Mammy want you to get knocked up and marry some wee sclaff.. and then spend the rest of your days dancin' attendance to him.?

**HELEN**

Yhe think that's whit wid happen.?

**BETTY**

Listen. Women have been second to men since the beginning of time. It's a conspiracy.

**HELEN**

Dae yhe think so.? ...Whit's ah conspiracy.?

**BETTY**

(indignant)

Think so!.. No I know so. What do they tell you.. right from the off.. God's a man. That's a conspiracy.

**HELEN**

Oh naw, ah heard oan the telly wan night, somebody sayin,' that God could be a wummin.

**BETTY**

(with disdain)

Huh! If there was a God and he was a "wummin", do you think the world would be the shit place it is. Listen, what did Jesus Christ say, when he said the Lords Prayer.?

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**  
(perplexed)

Ah don't know. Wis it in a film.?

**BETTY**  
(in exasperation and with  
emphasis)

No, it wasn't in a film. You know.. In  
the bible.. The good book?

**HELEN**

Aw, ah don't dae book readin' Betty.

**BETTY**

Look, the Lords Prayer, supposedly  
said by Jesus Christ, the son of God.  
"Our FATHER who art in heaven". No  
bloody, "Our mammy who art in heaven".  
Course, all this written by a man. And  
where does the bible say we come from,  
a spare bit of a man, ADAM. Again,  
written by a man.

**HELEN**  
(surprised and confused)

Are you religious Betty?

**BETTY**

No, I'm not religious. I'm an Atheist.

SHE BLESSES HERSELF

but a catholic one.

**HELEN**

Whit's an Atheist.?

**BETTY**

You don't believe in a God.



**HELEN**

How kin yhe be an ATHEIST then and be  
ah cathlic.?

**BETTY**

Oh that's easy...

**SHE SHRUGS**

You still carry around a lot of  
guilt...

Anyway, it doesn't matter what  
religion you are. Look at all they  
Talliban and Al Queada, runnin' about,  
wantin' to blow themselves and every  
other poor bugger up, so they can  
enter Paradise.

(with heavy cynicism)

With the promise of seventy-two  
virgins..

So no religious or political  
conviction there. Just the promise of  
a heavenly shag fest.. Typical of men,  
always led by their dicks.

And as if that wasn't daft enough. See  
they two, that tried to blow up the  
Airport ..

(incredulously)

Out Paisley way.

Where did they think they were going  
to get seventy-two virgins...In

PAISLEY.!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

Listen, we've been sold a load of crap  
since we were weans that the man's the  
bee's knees. So you tell your Mammy,  
you'll have it away with..

SHE WAVES HER ARMS IN THE AIR TO ENCOMPASS THE UNKNOWN

..whoever you fancy but.

WITH GROWING INDIGNATION SHE STABS A POINTED FINGER AT HELEN  
TO EMPHASISE EACH WORD.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

be beholding to no man.

**HELEN**

HOLDING UP HER HANDS TO DEFLECT THE CLOSING TIRADE

Whoa! Betty. Yhe want tae chill oot.

AND PULLING HER BAG, SITTING ON HER DESK, SHE STARTS TO  
RUMMAGE IN IT.

Dae yhe want some ay ma pills or a wee  
joint, Eh? That'll calm yhe doon.

**BETTY**

(shocked)

What drugs! Do you take drugs?

**HELEN**

(bewildered)

Everybody takes drugs.

**BETTY**

(indignant)

I don't.

**HELEN**

Aye well ah said yhe were auld  
fashioned.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

(concerned)

What does your Mother say. Does she know?

**HELEN**

Oh aye she's cool. I get her her's as well.

**BETTY**

And your Dad?

**HELEN**

Naw, he sticks tae e'se drink.

**BETTY**

(confused)

My God. Where do you get them, the drugs?

**HELEN**

(matter of fact)

Aff the Ice cream van. Yhe used tae be able tae get them aff the lemonade lorry as well but they chased him oot the scheme.

**BETTY**

Who did?

**HELEN**

(and with an incredulity at the naivety of the question)

Well the Ice cream people.. obviously. It wis a right shame. Yhe hiv tae cairry yir ginger boatles aw the wye fae the shops noo.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

Are you a drug addict?.. Is that what's been bothering you, keeping you late.?

**HELEN**

(indignant)

Naw ahm no a drug addict. Ah don't dae that much. An "E" noo an again, wi ma pals at the disco. A bit a blow wi me and ma Mammy, tae chill us oot. But no smack or coke. Ah tried a sniff ay that wance, the coke, but it gave me a sore throat so ah gie that a bye. Right enough, for aw ah knew it could hiv been talcum powder.

**BETTY**

(incredulous)

You sounds like a branch of Superdrug. And you're not worried about the dangers?

**HELEN**

Naw. Ahm careful about only usin' ma regular dealer. Ah hid a boyfriend wance but he got intae smack got some bad gear and died. Ah think he fancied the drugs mair than me.

SHE BOWS HER HEAD TO STARE INTO HER STILL OPEN HANDBAG AND WITH HEAVY DESPAIR.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

Ah think that's whit hurt the maist.  
The feeling that yhe didnae matter...  
that yhe were worth less than the cost  
eh ah score.

THEN LOOKING UP TO BETTY, AS SHE SLOWLY CLOSSES THE BAG AND  
PUTS IT AND THE MEMORIES BACK ON HER DESK.

Were you NEVER in love Betty?

**BETTY**

Once, years ago.. I wasn't a bad  
looker in my day. And then I met  
Joseph...  
(blissfully)

It was a perfect summer.

**HELEN**

(in a rush of youthful  
inquisitiveness)

So who wis'e ? Whit happened? Did yir  
husband find oot.?

**BETTY**

No. He knew nothing about it. Joseph  
was one of the foremen that managed  
the boys, repairin' and tendin' the  
graveyards.

**HELEN**

And?

**BETTY**

Well we got to know each other, when  
he would come in, to pick up their  
lines or their wages.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**

Wis it dead romantic.?

**BETTY**

(wistfully)

It was so romantic..He was a lovely man. Quiet. Polite. We would just sit and talk. He always had time to listen. Made me feel I had a worth. He loved Art..

(distracted)

Funny... you never think that of an ordinary worker..  
Anyhow, he used to take me now and then, at lunchtime, to the Art Galleries.. We would sit in a Gallery and he would explain the paintings to me.

THE STAGE IS SUDDENLY BLACKENED AND, AFTER A PAUSE, A SPOT ILLUMINATES BETTY, STANDING IN FRONT OF HER DESK CHAIR, STARING OUT AT THE AUDIENCE, UNSEEN, AS THOUGH IN A GALLERY AND LOOKING AT AND GENTLY MOVING HER HANDS TO SHAPE THE MEMORY OF THE PAINTINGS.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

And nothing was as it seemed..  
You think your looking at, maybe just a group of people.. but there's a whole hidden story going on behind what you think your looking at...  
He painted me into every picture.

SHE SITS DOWN ON HER CHAIR, STILL FACING THE AUDIENCE, IN REVERIE, HER HANDS NOW RESTING ON HER LAP.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

and I would just sit and stare and  
lose myself in their time and escape  
my own time.. And it was always  
peaceful in the galleries. People  
moved about.. quiet.. like shadows.  
Not wanting to disturb the magic.

SHE COMES OUT OF HER REVERIE AND THE STAGE IS ILLUMINATED AND  
TURNING BACK TO HELEN.

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

But oh I loved just bein' with him.  
Even when he just put his hand on my  
back, when he was lettin' me through a  
door. God, it was like electricity  
runnin' up through my body...

(she shivers in the memory)

Even the very brushin' of him against  
me, when we were walking, or sitting  
together.

He kissed me..just the once. We were  
sittin' in a Gallery . It was so...  
so gentle.

SHE SLAPS THE DESK FOR EMPHASIS.

( sharp and perfunctory)

And that was it. The next time we met,  
he said he was sorry he kissed me and  
he wouldn't do it again.

**HELEN**

(shocked confusion)

Why did'e say that.? Whit wis wrang.?

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

I didn't know. He moved to another job and I never saw him again, 'til years later, he bumped into me in the street.

**HELEN**

And did'e say anythin'?

**BETTY**

SHE SHRUGS WITH AN APPARENT DISREGARD FOR THE MEETING.

Aye he asked me to go with him for a coffee and then he asked me why I hadn't replied to his messages.

**HELEN**

Messages.? whit messages wis that?

**BETTY**

(dismissively)

Oh, he had phoned the office to speak to me a few times but I never took the calls, never phoned'm back.

**HELEN**

How no.?

**BETTY**

What would have been the point.?

**HELEN**

(enthralled)

So whit did he say. When yhe went fur yir coffee.?

**BETTY**

He said, "Remember when I kissed you" actually, he said embraced.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



BETTY (CONT'D)

I think he was to embarrassed to say  
kissed.

And I said "yes".. For some reason I  
always spoke polite when I was with  
Joseph. Anyway, he said, "you never  
kissed", sorry "embraced" me back.

**HELEN**

Whit did that mean.?

**BETTY**

When he kissed me.. ever so gentle,  
that one time, he lifted his face  
away..

SHE HOLDS THE PALM OF HER HAND, RECALLING AS HIS FACE HAD  
BEEN, A FEW INCHES IN FRONT OF HER OWN.

and just kept lookin' at me.

**HELEN**

(confused)

Lookin at yhe? Whit fur?

**BETTY**

He said he was waitin' for me to,  
reciprocate.

**HELEN**

(confused)

Reciprocate? Whit's that? Is it  
somethin.. yhe know.. no nice ?

**BETTY**

No. Reciprocate. Kiss him back.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**

Aw, Right. So why did yhe no.. yhe know, reciprocate then and kiss him back.

**BETTY**

Christ! I was married to a man that just took what he wanted. He never bothered his arse, if I reciprocated.

**HELEN**

So whit happened then.?

**BETTY**

I told you, nothing. I just kept lookin' at him, wonderin' what he wanted and then I said, we better be gettin' back to work.

**HELEN**

So whit did'e say.?

**BETTY**

I told you. He said, he was sorry he kissed me.

**HELEN**

Naw! Naw! Years later. When'e took yhe fur the coffee.?

**BETTY**

Oh. He said, when I didn't kiss, sorry, embrace him back, he thought he had taken things further than I wanted.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**

Further?.. Further than whit?

**BETTY**

Further than just a friendship. The  
kiss had been his mistake. That it had  
cost him more than he wanted to lose.

(she pauses to recall and  
list each of his regrets )

Our shared moments.. The joy of our  
friendship.. The sound of my laughter.

**HELEN**

So that wis the phone calls.. But yhe  
never took them, or answered them.?

**BETTY**

(sighing and with regret)

No. It was a love lost to my own  
failings. I had been living in the  
shadow of a dream. His regret for the  
kiss wakened me to the nightmare of my  
own insecurities and self worth. In  
the confusion then, of the kiss, we  
lost each other... completely.

**HELEN**

( halting and embarrassingly)

So, jist ah kiss. yhe never,...yhe  
know,...went tae bed wi'm.?

**BETTY**

No. It was never like that.

(CONTINUED)

**HELEN**

(uncertainly)

Is that no whit yir supposed tae dae..  
wi' somebody that loves yhe.?

**BETTY**

Not necessarily. There are different  
kinds of love.

**HELEN**

Oh...

So did yhe never meet up wi' him  
again.?

**BETTY**

No. The years had passed and there was  
an awkward regret.  
But I still carry the memory, of what  
a perfect love might have been.

**HELEN**

(wistfully)

That's dead sad romantic Betty. Dae  
yhe think ah'll ever hiv.. ah perfect  
love.

**BETTY**

You'll have a perfect love with your  
own child.

**HELEN**

Did you no hiv any weans.?

**BETTY**

Christine.. she was stillborn.. and  
that ended that for me...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

Maybe just as well. I was married to a wean and he was a handful.

HELEN

Aw, ahm awfy sorry Betty. Did yhe never hiv ah happy marriage.?

BETTY

RISING FROM HER DESK, TAKING HER COFFEE MUG BACK TO PLACE ON THE SHELF AND TURNING TO HELEN.

Bit of a contradiction in terms there.

SHE BALANCES THE WEIGHT OF EACH WORD IN HER HANDS.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Happy...Marriage.

What's a Happy Marriage.?

I just kinda fell into it. If I think about it at all, I don't think I ever really loved him. Liked him..a bit.. at first.. but not enough that I should have wanted to handcuff myself to him for the rest of my days.

HELEN

Whit did yhe marry him fur then.?

BETTY

(with embarrassment)

God.. This is a terrible confession to make but.. I thought he was the best I could do.

HELEN

(puzzled)

That disnae sound anythin' like you Betty.

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY**

Life soon puts callouses on you...

**HELEN**

Wis it always that terrible?

**BETTY**

No. when he was at his work, or in the pub, or sleepin'.. Then it was fine.

**HELEN**

Why did yhe no leave him then?

**BETTY**

Different times Helen. And after a while, it just becomes a habit. One day drifts into the next, the next week, the next month, the next year .. and you lose any sense of where your going, or how to steer another course.

**HELEN**

Wis'e bad tae yhe.?

**BETTY**

BETTY CROSSES TO STAND OVER AND ADDRESS HER REMARKS TO THE BOX.

You know, I don't think he ever really thought about it, one way or the other. I was his wife, but nobody said the weddin' vows meant surrenderin' my dignity.

SHE TURNS, SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO HELEN

(CONTINUED)

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

Love and honour goes both ways, you  
know. He only ever got the obey bit...

SHE TURNS BACK TO STARE OUT THE WINDOW, LOST IN MEMORY

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

Every year we would go away our  
holidays, Funnily enough, a fortnight  
in Rothesay. And every year, on the  
first day, he would take me down to  
the jewellers shop and buy me a bit of  
jewellery.

**HELEN**

RISING FROM HER DESK CHAIR, WITH A RUSH OF INNOCENT  
ENTHUSIASM

Aw well, that wis nice. He must hiv  
really loved yhe, tae buy yhe  
jewellery

**BETTY**

TURNING BACK SHARPLY, TO FACE HELEN.

That wasn't love. That was my pay. To  
be available to him.

**HELEN**

(confused)

Whit dae yhe mean.. Available.?

**BETTY**

(venomously)

Sex, I mean available for sex---sex.  
He had bought me a ring. So I had been  
bought and paid for, so I should be  
grateful too him. A fortnights change  
of pub, more drink and sex for him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

A fortnights change of a cooker, a  
sink and rape for me.

**HELEN**  
(confused)

Is that whit it wis like.. Rape?

**BETTY**  
(with bitter regret)

That's what it was. If your forced to  
it, or just surrender to it, it's  
rape. Rothesay was never my idea of  
Paradise Island, it was my Devil's  
Island

**HELEN**

Is that why yhe don't wear any  
jewellery.?

**BETTY**

SHE STRETCHES OUT HER HANDS TO CATCH THE LIGHT FROM THE  
WINDOW, TO REFLECT, MOMENTARILY, UPON THE SPREAD OF HER BARE  
FINGERS.

Aye, I stopped wearin' the cost of my  
humiliations ,the price of my shame,

BETTY BRUSQUELY KICKS THE BOX FURTHER UNDER THE WINDOW AND  
SPEAKS, AS SHE STEPS UP TO LOOK OUT THE WINDOW

**BETTY (CONT'D)**

When I boxed him up.

STANDING, TRANSFIXED, HER ARMS WRAPPED TIGHTLY TO HER.  
NURSING AND PROTECTING HER FROM THE WRATH OF HER PAST.

**HELEN**

BOWING HER HEAD, SHE NERVOUSLY CONTINUES TO PULL AT HER GOLD  
CHAIN NECKLACES AND THEN, LOOKING UP, TO BETTY.

Betty.

AND AS BETTY TURNS TO ACKNOWLEDGE HELEN. THE STAGE LIGHTS  
EXTINGUISH, LEAVING TWO SPOTS. ONE ON BETTY, ONE ON HELEN.

(CONTINUED)



**HELEN (CONT'D)**

Ma Daddy buys me ma jewellery.

A MOMENTARY FROZEN TABLEAU, OF BETTY AND HELEN IN THE SPOTS.

LIGHTS OUT.

THE END

(CONTINUED)

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